

**DAMIEN
TAVIS
TOMAN:
SUICIDE
SOLILO-
QUIES.**

SUICIDE SOLILOQUIES
by Damien Tavis Toman

#1

It wasn't that you didn't love me;
Only that, in your love, I sensed such hesitation—
—

Something withheld
On the back of your tongue, where mine couldn't
reach,
And sometimes the grip of your hand
Seemed to grow lax
As if you wished to shake me off and bolt
Into the bushes
There to hide fawnlike from my doting.

#2

The streets smelled of lo mein
And strangers hung in the doorways
Like effigies tonight, on my way home,
When I made my decision.
I ate no dinner, but went to bed directly,
Where you'll find me
Neither sleeping nor waking.

#3

The world, it is true, doesn't *want* anyone;
It simply takes what it can get
And forgets its ill-begotten.
So was I forgotten;
But world, remember this:
You never got me,
The least of your unwanted.

#4

I spilled a whole bottle of whiskey this morning,
So badly did my hands shake,
Catching what I could of it
As it dribbled off the counter.
Then I went to my meeting--
So full of whining and counterfeit embraces--
And left feeling sick and thirsty.
They tell me that I'm powerless:
I'll show them that I'm not.

#5

On an errand in the hardware store,
I found a coiled length of hempen rope.
I brought it to my nostrils,
And thought of the horse stalls
At the old county fair.
But life is no carnival:
It tramples your toes and snorts in your face,
And one way or another,
We're led by the neck
By a rope.

#6

What chance did I have?
Born heartbroken, uncomely of form,
Ready to cry over anything....
Life treated me as a knife-thrower's target
Or a dart-board, drunkenly pierced;
And though I'm no St. Sebastian,
I am martyred, murdered all the same.

#7

Too many doctors, nurses, counselors;
Too many opinions, diagnoses, trials;
Too many times told to try breathing exercises,
Or meditation, or yoga,
Or positive self-talk and such.
How does one treat a nostalgia for oblivion?

How else can one unbirth oneself?

#8

I know that I have been sundered,
And there is no stitch to stitch the rift,
And there is no way to dissuade me
From my inglorious aim.

For my flesh she made her mantle,
And my guts she made her girdle,
And my heart alone she left me,
To beat without an aim.

#9

There are some who fall from the apex,
And many who drown in the depths,

But we're all autochthonic
To the rank primeval mud.
If by this I'm made ignoble,
Execrable and cursed,
Take thought that when you bury me,
You're burying yourselves.

This house was meant to save us
With its many-windowed brightness
And its working fireplace.
It was wonderful how you loved it,
And appointed it with glee,
But I knew you'd rather live here
With anyone but me.

#11

You already know about the tall Romanian
mistress,
And the late nights at the office,
Sharing wine and kisses
With my sophomore star-student.
You already know how I drank while you slept,
And how I never went to work without my flask.
You already know how I smashed our wedding
pictures,
Bashed in our bedroom door,
And tore your blouse as you retreated.
But did you know, darling,
That my love for you was like an ever-burning
altar,
And that no man can be wedded to a goddess?

#12

Daughter, if you'd but speak to me,
If only to call me bastard,
Tonight perhaps I'd not be drunk,
With my heart at the pit of my bottle,
And my hand fixed around contoured metal,
In my wife-beater, blue-hued from the TV.
Now if perchance you do call me,
If only to call me a failure,
The phone will ring on
Perhaps until dawn
Splatters light on a slumped-over nothing.

#13

Our Father who art in heaven,
I shit upon your name
For each degrading decade
That I spent without a sign
Of your mercy, grace, forgiveness,
Or love, despite my weeping
And imploring day and night.
Now I'll tell you to your own face
What kind of father you have been,
Expecting torments no more ruthless
Than the ones I leave behind.

#14

Three months before my wedding
I called it off; I cast her off,
With nothing there to catch her,
So caught up with you was I.
We formed a sort of double-axis,
We made opposing revolutions
Around a doomed and dimming sun.
Your mother was against me;
I was occupied with drinking,
Then you enrolled down in D.C.
And you left me with no choice.

#15

On the bridge over the Hudson,
The mountains (round-topped Catskills,)
Just as Irving described them,
Ominous and blue,
Will be my western destination,
Will be the last thing that I see.

#16

I never knew a thing about you!
Together in this spaceless space--
Bed and desk and teetering shelves,
Television never silenced,
Refrigerator never full,
We've curled up on our single bed,
Touching and yet not embracing,

Beneath one ash-strewn comforter,
Beneath one burn-speckled sheet,
Awakening at different hours,
Then shooting up with tenderness,
With needles labeled “His” and “Hers.”
But I never knew a thing about you,
And you cared to know nothing of me.

#17

The scholar is the farthest thing from the genius.
Under green lamps, over long tables,
I have scorched my eyes upon the leafs
Of scholars dull as I. And for what?
Books more robbed than written

And a bibliography.
But my office on the tenth floor
Stands direct above the concourse,
And my window stands a-gaping,
Wide enough for this dull man.

#18

I was married to a woman who possessed all
virtues:
Honesty, prudence, kindness, generosity,

industry, etc.--

Everything but a soul.

When I confessed, "I am tormented,"

She asked, "What torments you?"

When I said, "My God has left me,"

She scoffed, "There is no God."

Over time this quandary

Chrystalized into antipathy,

Until at last she told me, "I want somebody
happy."

I could only say, "I'm sorry,"

Now I'm saying it again.

We had a pact to die together
On a musty rented king bed;
She brought pills enough for both of us,
And a brand-new pack of razors;
She had champagne, I had brandy;
I passed out on the brandy, so she took the pills
herself.

I awoke to find the pact only half completed
And I thanked God for the razors
She was sharp enough to bring.

#20

Somebody had to take care of Chester;
I was alone but for him, and weary of living,
So I resolved to wait.
One day he started pissing on the couch and in
the kitchen,
Next his legs fell from beneath him
And he dragged himself around,
Until at last I found him,
Stone-stiff by the trash bins,
So I closed the lid upon him,
Quite relieved and sick of life.

#21

Do you remember the cigarettes we smoked,
One at a time, taking turns,
Standing fearless on the sidewalk across from the
school,
In contempt of all who might see us?
You never knew, but I used to pretend
That each drag I took was equal to a kiss,
And the touch of your hand as we passed back
and forth
Sent a jolt through my vulnerable heart.
But you'd never stop talking as together we
smoked
Of the cuteness of Josh, the hotness of Todd,
And by God,
It was too much to live with.

#22

Our apartment was ugly and remote,
Mildew had conquered the closets;
Black mold crept up from the corners;
Every day you complained and lamented.
But the single good feature
Was the big bedroom window
From which nothing but forest and marsh could be
seen.
Beer in hand I would stare
Far as my eyes could take me
As you told me how useless I was.
And now you can find me
Past the marsh, in the forest,

And discover how useful I've made myself
To the crows, and the vultures, and you.

#23

“You're not *very* handsome,”
She reflected after we had begun to undress.
Call me vain, over-sensitive, as you like,
But that one observation, from a one-time lover,
Has lodged in me—a thorn in my heart—
For above three years.
Am I also not *very* intelligent,
Very charming, *very* worthwhile?
Perhaps the answer lies with Raymond Chandler:
I can at least be *very* dead.

#24

Driving her back from a home-cooked dinner
With my wife,
She asked to stop someplace and talk.
I chose the Rural Graveyard, rolled into the back,
And shut off the lights.
“I need you,” she said; I didn’t protest it.
The obelisks watched our contortions.
I came home conspicuously late,
Ruffled, smelling of earth and villainy,

And set to doing the dishes.
Now it's midnight; I'm in the same cemetery,
Praying to the dead for forgiveness
And for a cordial reception.

END